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Housekeepers' Chats

December 31, 1930

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Painless Parties for the Youngest." Approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A. Menu and recipes from the Bureau of Home Economics.

Bulletins available: Good Food Habits for Children.

The grown-ups in our family are not the only ones who are having gayety this week. The youngest generation is also being entertained. Horace and Ann have had two invitations to parties this week, one to an afternoon affair at Sandy Jackson's house and another to Dotty Miller's birthday supper.

When Horace came in last night to tell Uncle Ebenezer the news, Uncle Ebenezer groaned. And then he growled.

"You two youngsters would be better off, I do believe, if you were locked up on the afternoons of those occasions."

Horace looked so surprised and hurt at this outburst, that I made haste to say, "What do you mean, Uncle Ebenezer? You sound positively ferocious. And you look as if you were gritting your teeth."

Uncle Ebenezer groaned again. "Any right-minded uncle ought to be ferocious at the way children's parties are carried on in this day and age. And to think of sending children to two parties in one week. It's unkind. It's cruel."

"Do explain yourself."

"My idea is that birthday parties and other such celebrations should give the children happiness, not digestive upsets. Do they? No. Why? Because for some strange reason, the most sensible parents become foolish on such occasions. At most parties little children, yes, the smallest tots, are served quantities of rich cake, candy and other sweets difficult to digest. Unthinking adults too often serve such refreshments either late in the afternoon, just in time to spoil the evening meal, or late in the evening when children should be asleep."

Horace was looking deeply serious, apparently taking in every word Uncle Ebenezer was saying.

"I believe that celebrations, at least for the child of pre-school age should be arranged to give him pleasure. What do you think of that Horace?"

Horace nodded solemnly.

"And I say that that means avoiding over-excitement and fatigue, as well as the wrong food. Too many guests and too much food and too much rushing around is a dreadful combination, enough to upset all the children for days."

Uncle Ebenezer swallowed hard. "Painless parties, that's what I believe in. I'd like to give one myself for Horace and Ann, just to show what an uncle with some sense believes in when it comes to frolics for nieces and nephews."

Horace looked delighted; his face was all one big beaming smile.

Ann clapped her hands and said, "When?"

I'll tell you what it will be like. First, we won't have too many little guests to make the children tired. If it's a birthday, we might say as many guests as the child is years old. Then we would serve the refreshments at the right hour. Since youngsters of pre-school age are usually receiving a mid-afternoon lunch regularly, the party food might be served at this time. Or it might be a noon-time party. There's an idea. Since Horace and Ann have their biggest meal at noon, why not have their friends come in and eat it with them?"

"That would we have to eat?" asked Horace.

"That's for your Aunt Sammy to say."

I thought it over. Appearances I knew had much to do with any child's appetite and enjoyment of food. So it occurred to me that the best way of carrying out Uncle Ebenezer's idea would be to serve the usual simple dishes in the child's regular menu in some new and attractive way, making special use of color to appeal to his eye. I was sure that if the refreshments looked party-like he would enjoy them just as much as the fanciest cakes and candies. And there would be no upsets and unhappiness following the party.

"If it is an afternoon party," I suggested, "we might serve sponge cake or cookies with orange juice or milk in those pretty glasses and provide straws to sip it through. Or we might have diluted cocoa served in Ann's favorite yellow cups."

"What about sandwiches?"

"Yes, indeed. Whole wheat bread sandwiches made with a filling of finely chopped lettuce, celery or other raw vegetables creamed with butter. The sandwiches could be cut in fancy shapes and wrapped in waxed paper tied with colored ribbon. And I'm sure they would be quite as much of a treat as the rich, hearty, too-sweet foods so often served."

Now for that menu for the grown-ups New Year's Eve party that I promised you yesterday. If you are asking friends in to watch the new year in, and want to serve them an evening buffet supper very informally, here is a menu planned just for the occasion. Or if after a late, hearty dinner on New Year's Day, you are serving a light evening meal, it will also be appropriate.

Are you all ready to write the menus? Welsh rabbit on toast or on crisp crackers; Pickles; Grapefruit, onion and lettuce salad with French dressing; Salted almonds; Coffee.

I have a fine recipe for that Welsh rabbit mentioned in the menu. There are nine ingredients:

1 pint of milk
4 tablespoons of melted butter or other fat
4 tablespoons of flour
1/2 teaspoon of salt
1/2 pound cheese, shaved thin
Tabasco sauce
Onion juice
Soy sauce
1 egg
Let me repeat that list (REPEAT)

Heat the milk in a double boiler. Mix the melted fat, flour, and salt, and stir into them a small quantity of the heated milk. Add this to the remainder of the milk, stir until thickened, add the cheese and a few drops of each of the seasonings, and heat lightly until the cheese has melted. Pour a little of the cheese mixture into the well beaten egg, then add this to the rabbit and cook for 2 or 3 minutes longer. Serve on thin crisp toast or crackers.

If you are serving the rabbit on crackers, be sure to crisp them in the oven a few minutes beforehand.

For the salad peel and cut in thin slices mild Bermuda or Spanish onions. Allow these large thin slices to stand in slightly sweetened French dressing for perhaps an hour before arranging them on the lettuce. On crisp leaves of lettuce put first, the rings of onion and then the sections of grapefruit skinned. The delicate colors of the grapefruit and the onion on the green leaf makes this a very pretty salad. And the combination, though an unusual one, is most delicious.

Tomorrow: "Recipes for New Year's Fun"

